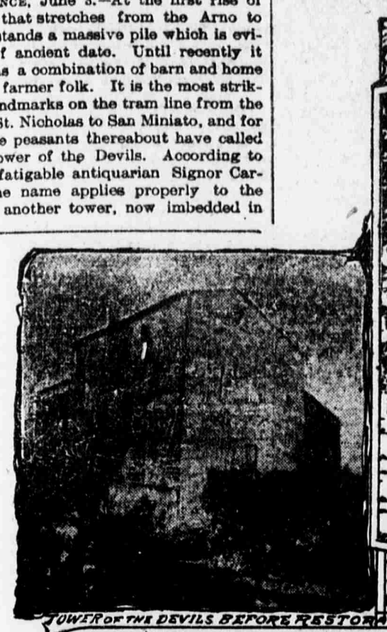
## THE TOWER OF THE DEVILS.

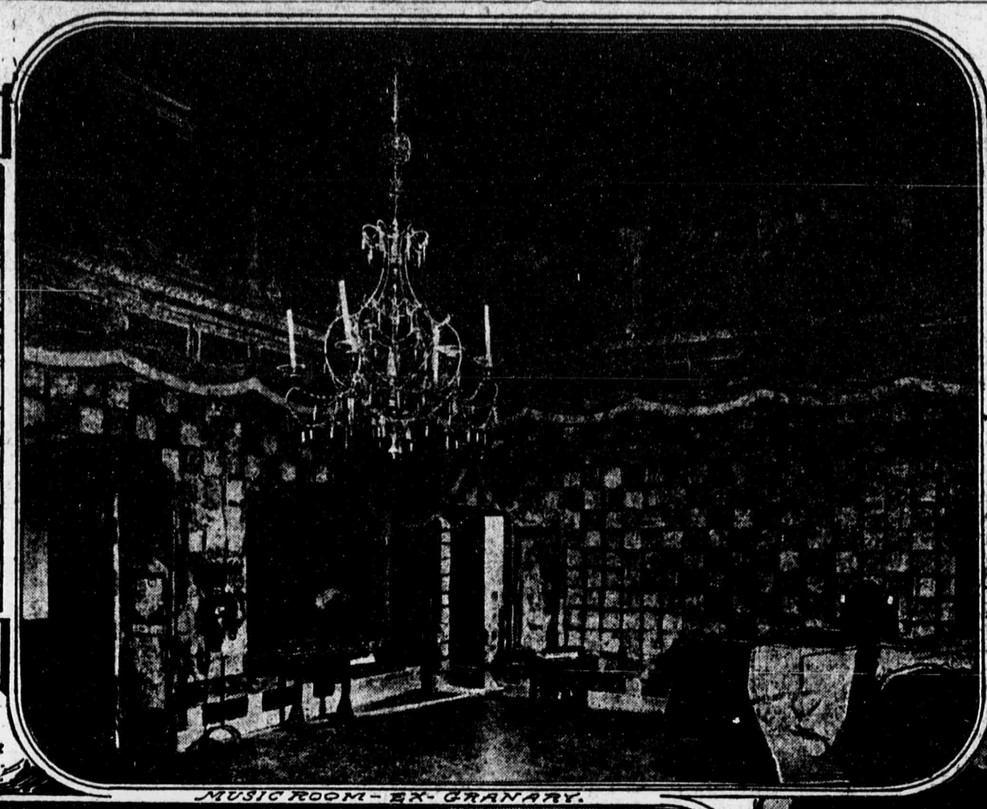
### Retrieving a Tuscan Castle.

FLORENCE, June 3.—At the first rise of the hill that stretches from the Arno to Arcetri stands a massive pile which is evidently of ancient date. Until recently it served as a combination of barn and home for poor farmer folk. It is the most striking of landmarks on the tram line from the Gate of St. Nicholas to San Miniato, and for years the peasants thereabout have called it the Tower of the Devils. According to the indefatigable antiquarian Signor Carrocci, the name applies properly to the ruins of another tower, now imbedded in the new buildings of the neighboring French nunnery. In a recent interview with the prioress the proprietor of the Torre dei Diavoli was emphatically assured that the sisters make no claim to that ancient and picturesque designation. For that matter it appears that Signor Carrocci was wrong and that since the late sixteenth century this fortress villa has enjoyed its diabolical fame.

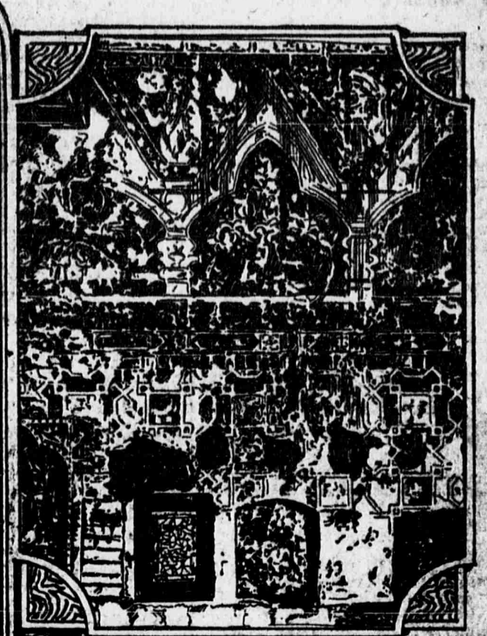


TOWER OF THE DEVILS BEFORE RESTORATION

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN ONLY FRESCO NOT COVERED WITH WHITE WASH.



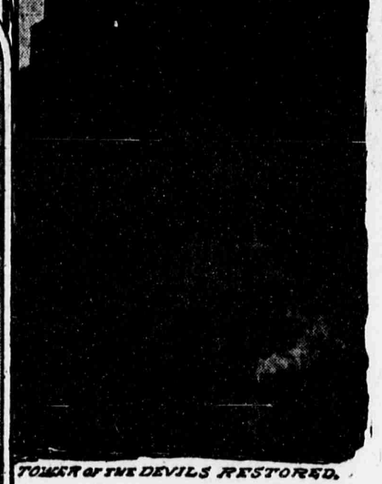
MUSIC ROOM—EX-GRANARY.



DECORATION OF STUDIO—EX-MAYLOFT.

FRAGMENT OF AN UNRESTORED FRESCO OF THE 13TH CENTURY.

ENTRANCE HALL—EX-KITCHEN.



TOWER OF THE DEVILS RESTORED.

Fortunately the tower of the Devils has stood in a most neglected condition. Everywhere the stucco was scaling from the walls, and the better to serve its purpose as a barn, practically all the windows had been closed up. Still, the blind castle, to all who had discernment in these matters, had clearly seen better days. There were rumors that some years ago the great antiquary Bardini had bought a fine ceiling from the hayloft. The few who had looked over the house reported vaguely interesting remains of massive architecture. Since the tower stood, moreover, on a far seeing ridge and had its pleasant patch of vines and olives, it became a desired object among a few foreign residents of romantic tastes. A number of us were quite willing to buy it when our ship came in. Before that arrival an American painter long resident in Florence, Julius Rolshoven, bought the castle and began its rehabilitation.

There were plenty of reasons for acquiring the place, but I fancy Mr. Rolshoven may have found an especial inducement in a tiny painting that nobody else had noticed or at least understood. In a niche in the highest room in the tower, by squeezing in between the hay and the wall, one might see a little fresco, a good fourteenth century style, representing the coronation of the Virgin. It could be studied only by the somewhat perilous method of striking wax matches in a haymow. These were, one may imagine, Mr. Rolshoven's beacon lights. In any case he no sooner began repairing the outside of his castle than he set a number of workmen at picking off the interior whitewash.

Here it should be said that the recovery of early Italian mural paintings consists chiefly in removing whitewash, and that the process is still far from complete. To be sure, most, by no means all, of the famous places mentioned by Vasari or other chroniclers have been explored, but no week passes when somewhere in Italy a new fresco is not uncovered. What happened in the Tower of the Devils is merely what was happening in many other places, but with this difference, that whereas such discoveries are usually made in religious buildings, Mr. Rolshoven had the good fortune to recover the complete decoration of a fortress villa. Scraps of such painting one may see here and there in Tuscany, but I know of no other private dwelling where one may find four halls frescoed in the fourteenth century. Before the original decorations were reached many layers of newer plaster, stencilled in the most barbarous fashion, had to be carefully removed, and then followed a most delicate process, not of restoration but of needful repair.

But before we take up the mural paintings in detail the general condition of the tower and its restoration to approximately the original state must occupy us for a moment. It was bought for a brick building, so deceiving was its crumbling stucco. On the removal of this unsightly cover excellent stone masonry appeared, window arches of the type we see in the Bargello, and a whole series of stopped windows and loopholes. These were all opened except in one instance, where the change dated from the fourteenth century. On studying the top of the tower it appeared that a whole upper story had been removed. Fortunately the demolition had stopped at the window sills, the measurements of which gave a clue to the original dimensions. Besides this restoration an outside staircase of comparatively recent date was done away with. The cuts of the tower before and after the restorations show about what was done.

Inside there was even more to do. The hall of the knights on the ground floor had been impartially divided into a kitchen and cow stable. This partition, being of fairly ancient date, was respected, but the cows were eliminated. The ground floor of the tower proper had become a granary, the corresponding hall upstairs a hayloft. The peasant family had huddled into such space as was not needed for the harvested crops. One enters to-day the hall of the knights and sees a wide frieze decorated with tilted coats of arms. The helmets and crests are boldly painted and form fine silhouettes. Under each shield is the name of its bearer in letters most tantalizingly illegible. One may recover such names as Francesco and Giovanni, only to be halted where the inscription begins to approach a genealogical clue. A Florentine scholar has said that the arms seem German, not Italian, and one recalls that many of the old Florentine families, the Alighieri, for example, claimed descent from the Teutonic conqueror of Italy. I think, however, that the blazon of the Cavalcanti and that of the Davanzati may be recognised. Happily we are able to identify the bearings of the proprietor, presumably the builder of the tower. One sees it in many places—upon a field azure a St. Andrew's cross argent. It is the device of the Talani family. Unhappily this does not take us far, for the Talani have not yet been studied. In the seventeenth century genealogy we find that originally the family called itself Filipetri and was of strong Ghibelline temper. It was presumably to weather the general proscription of the Ghibellines at the end of the thirteenth century that the name was changed. There is a high probability that the proprietor of the tower was among the imperialists proscribed with Dante. Upon all these matters the study of the blazons in the hall of the knights, representing presumably the kinsmen and retainers of the Talani, may some day shed light, but the search will be difficult, for the heraldry of this early period is largely matter of conjecture. Until 1457 it remained in the hands of the Talani. In that year it was bought by the patrician merchant Piero di Luca Pitti for 1,000 florins. The page which records this transaction contains also items regarding the earlier portions of the Pitti Palace.

Before leaving the hall of the knights the method of restoration, or rather repair, should be noted. Too often an ancient fresco is no sooner freed from its whitewash than it is completely repainted—to all intents and purposes destroyed. Here there has been no repainting of any sort. Where the plaster had actually come away it has been replaced. Such patches when not too large and disfiguring have simply been tinted in neutral tones. Where the gap is great and unsightly the pattern has been carried on in a summary and suggestive form, which to a trained eye is immediately distinguishable from the original painting. No one with the slightest experience in old mural painting need be in doubt where the original work ends and the modern repair begins. In this matter Mr. Rolshoven has set an example in good taste and good sense to all who have to do with damaged remains of frescoes. It seems to me that the principle is applicable to all restoration and repair of painting. I believe that a more enlightened age, far from priding itself on restoring like the original, will insist that all retouches shall be discernible. The art of the restorer will consist not in concealing his work but in making it inoffensive.

Leaving the hall of the knights—ex-kitchen and cow stable—we enter what was the granary and is now a music room, occupying most of the ground floor of the tower proper. Here is the most harmonious, if not the most elaborate and best preserved decoration in the castle. It is as well very characteristic of mediæval painted schemes. Paint, it would appear, was never held in high esteem for its own sake, and the artisan decorator so far as possible made his fresco resemble nobler materials. Whoever studies early religious painting at Rome best will not fail to perceive that fresco was treated as a kind of poor relation of mosaic. Here at Florence the designer has taken as his motive an open colonnaded frieze above a wall panelled in colored marbles and hung with a figured drapery. The illustration will make the scheme plain, but it cannot show the delicacy of the touch nor the charm of these graceful bottle vases and battered green trees, all different, against the faded blue of the sky. Much of the elaborate border of the false tapestry has vanished, and its pattern has been reduced to a checker, monotonous but still effective. Originally each square bore the coronet, resembling a marquis's, which distinguished families in which knighthood was hereditary. The colors, now softened and deepened by time and decay, were originally very bright. Blue and red played a large part, and the green trees with varied fruits and blossoms must have stood vivid against an azure sky. Alongside the music room is a smaller hall completely decorated with a geometrical, semi-Oriental tile design, excellently well preserved.

The studio above was, as we have noted, the old haymow, which contained the only bit of exposed painting, a small "Coronation of the Virgin." Here has been uncovered a most elaborate frieze above a wall design in the form of a geometrical interlace. This wall pattern derives eventually from Saracenic models. The larger tilelike forms of the wall contain faded papal tiaras. Evidently the Talani by the time this hall was done over had quite outgrown their old Ghibelline associations.

The frieze is an open arcade of cusped Gothic arches, each framing in a conventionalized tree. The meander above contained originally twenty-six half length effigies of kings and champions, of which some twenty are more or less visible to-day. Here and there among inscriptions generally illegible we may read such sonorous names as "Randafonte" and "Puglia" (Apulia), presumably the titles of these great warriors. Many of the figures, of which about twenty are still distinguishable, have great spirit, but on the whole the work shows a less delicate touch than we find in the decorations downstairs. There were originally many smaller subjects in low niches. Of these only the "Coronation of the Virgin" has survived. It appears to be a version of the central panel of the Baroncelli altarpiece in Santa Croce, a work still attributed to Giotto, but probably by an imitator who worked about 1320.

As to the date of the tower and its decorations opinions will not differ greatly. The mural paintings which have been already briefly described can hardly be set very much earlier or later than 1350, if we consult merely their style. But the castle is older than they are. A part of the decoration of the studio is painted over one of the original windows, which had been walled up for that purpose. The masonry of the building recalls that of the expansive period following the middle of the thirteenth century, but a cautious critic would hardly venture to date the tower within fifty years merely on this testimony of the rocks. Some visitors have held the vaultings of the cellar to be of great, perhaps Lombardic antiquity. Without denying this, I can merely say that the data seem insufficient for a close decision. Happily we are not dependent upon such conjectures. By great good fortune one precious scrap of the original wall painting has survived to date the structure and suggests its first impressiveness.

One day the masons were working in the open air in the demolished top of the tower, where had earlier been a roofed chamber. Suddenly the pick smashed through a thin bit of masonry into a concealed niche. Two or three more vigorous strokes would have reduced the hidden fresco to chunks of plaster. Fortunately the workman, an enthusiast for the antiquities of the place, thought to look first into the niche; saw, or divined, the painting, carefully removed about half the masonry screen, and called Mr. Rolshoven. As he came up hundreds of ants, who had immemorially used the niche as a granary, swarmed out to the sunlight, and the half effaced eyes of the head within seemed to blink over the rough parapet in the unwonted radiance. Since the niche where the head was found was to be in a loggia exposed to the weather, that entire section of wall was carefully cut out and is now kept in the entrance hall below. We have here undoubtedly a bit of the decoration executed immediately after the building of the tower. It is one of the very few unrestored fragments of fresco in Tuscany that antedate the Giottesque period. We have here not merely a fine fragment of Tuscan painting prior to Giotto, but, I think, an example of that early school which placidly continued its tradition in the teeth of Cimabue's reform. Note the large, monumental quality of this female bust and you will recall the paintings of the Catacombs and the earlier mosaics at Ravenna. We have to do with a sort of persistence of the Roman manner through the rivalry of the Byzantine, barbaric and modernising schools.

Whom this head represents I am unable to say. It has already been called for no good reason a Madonna. It is plausible to think it the effigy of a female saint, a patroness of the Filipetri-Talani family. On the other hand, there is no sign either of halo or saintly symbol, and I like to think that it is merely an idealization of some lady love or wife of the builder of the tower. In any case it cannot have been painted many years from the time when Dante tells us in the "Vita Nuova" he tried to draw an angel. His sketch, barring the difference between an amateur and a rather fine professional performance, must have resembled greatly this unknown chatelaine of the Tower of the Devils.

This bit of fresco represents about the best that Florence had to offer toward the close of the thirteenth century. It is better for its time than the later and more complete decorations are for theirs. The great name of Orcagna has been suggested for the little "Coronation of the Virgin" in the studio niche; but this view calls for no serious refutation. All the fourteenth century decoration of the tower is sensitive both in design and execution, but there is no reason to suppose that any great artist either planned or carried out the work. It is an example of good average craftsmanship of a time when routine craftsmanship easily surpassed most of what we choose to consider our art. As a comprehensive and nearly complete example of secular decoration of the fourteenth century the tower has great interest; as a wholly unrestored example, probably unique value. Many will find most appealing to the imagination the hint of fine old work hidden under whitewash throughout Italy. Tuscany in particular is full of seignorial halls that have become granaries, cow stables or warrens for the *contadini*. Who will find and buy those that contain fine frescoes? Who will pick the whitewash off delicately; and who, having done that, will have the good sense and good will to repair his find without destroying it utterly?

FRANCIS COTTON.

## READY TO CHEAT THE YANKEE

### EUROPEAN TRADERS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AMERICANS.

**One Man Forced to Pay a Bill a Second Time Because He Mentioned That His Private Papers Had Been Destroyed —Danger in Not Fixing the Price.**

An American woman who had been making a few small purchases in the largest shop on the Friedrichstrasse was particularly taken with a watch one of the salesmen showed to her.

"Only 620 marks," he said, holding it up while the light played on the gems, and then opening the watch to show the delicate works, "It's so cheap. You would have to pay twice as much at home."

"I've no doubt of it," was the answer in hopeless tones. "But I could not buy it if it cost only half as much. I'm on my way home, and that means I've only enough to pay my fees on the steamer."

Then the salesman told her not to worry over the price, that she should take the watch and pay for it when she wanted, and that there need not be any formality beyond her leaving her address.

"We have never lost a cent through Americans, and we're not afraid of them," the salesman went on. "You take the watch and we will wait until you're ready to send us the money."

When the American left the shop she wore the watch on her chain, and after a while the money came to the jewellers.

This story is interesting now for the unusual confidence that this particular tradesman showed. Nowadays such a state of affairs is by no means so common. Not only are the tradesmen of London and Paris less willing even than those of this country to give credit to Americans, but many of them have exhibited during the last few years a degree of sharpness which was never expected before. It is a singular fact that the shops that show this spirit are those with the largest number of American customers. In spite of the talk about the trickiness of foreign tradesmen it never used to happen that the best establishments would resort to tricks to make their customers pay more than the regular price; but they do that now.

"Take my experience in Paris," said a man who returned last week from Europe, "and it will give you an idea of the sort of thing that is happening there all the time now. I was talking to a friend of mine who had settled in Paris after the earthquake in San Francisco, which destroyed his home. I told him I had just been at a shirt shop in the Rue de la Paix to order handkerchiefs and waistcoats.

"'I've passed up that man for good,' he said to me, 'after my experience with him when I came over two years ago. I went there immediately, explaining to him that I wanted some shirts made up immediately as everything in the world I owned had been destroyed in the earthquake and that all I had was a few ready made things I had picked up in New York on my way over. I was going over to London to order some clothes and wanted him to hurry up with my shirts, which he had been making almost twenty years.

"'I haven't a stitch left,' I said to him; 'even my private papers were burned.'

"'Your private papers,' he repeated. 'Why, that was very inconvenient.'

"I did not realize how inconvenient it would turn out to be until I got back from London and found in additon to the shirts he had delivered a bill for more than 1,000 francs. I was in the neighborhood the next day and stopped in to ask why my bill had been sent in so promptly. It had never before come with the goods.

"'Oh, that is the bill from last fall when you were here,' the cashier said. 'It was not paid before you left and I sent it along with the new order.'

"I knew perfectly well that I had paid that bill. I never left accounts behind me in Europe, especially when they went up to such a figure. I told the cashier and had him bring out the proprietor. I told him that of course I had paid the bill, as I had always made it a rule to for the past score of years. Then the old fox, who had heard me tell him only a few weeks before that my papers had been destroyed, said:

"'Then of course monsieur has the receipt. If the account has been paid he must have the receipt. But we have no record of the payment. However, that will cause no trouble. All that you have to do, sir, is to send us the receipt.'

"I stuck out a long time, but in the end I had to pay the bill a second time, all because I had inadvertently dropped that hint about losing my papers. You must realize that I had been a customer there for years, had paid them large bills and sent many people to them. Yet when the opportunity offered they did not hesitate to cheat me out of that extra bill. Now this place exists from patronage of Americans and the English. Comparatively few Frenchmen ever go into it. Until they came to realize how easy we are nobody would have been cheated there. The generous, careless, open handed manner of our countrymen in dealing with tradesmen in whom they have confidence cannot be understood over in Europe.

The American who heard this began to fear for his own bill, although in the past he had never been overcharged.

"Do you mean to say you didn't ask the price of everything?" was the question from the victim. "Then you'll surely be sadly stuck."

So it was with some uncertainty that he went to the store the next week to look over his orders. True, he was paying for white waistcoats, of which he had ordered six, twice as much as they had ever cost him before. Of all the other articles he had in advance inquired the price, although he was in the habit of buying these same things every year.

"Why in the world should I pay 60 francs for those waistcoats when I order them here in Paris," he asked, "when in New York from your man who comes every fall and spring I pay only 40? That makes it much cheaper for your customers to stop in New York and order their things there."

The salesman of course knew nothing about that. All he seemed to be perfectly sure of was that the kind of waistcoats ordered had cost always 60 francs.

"When will your representative who comes every winter to New York be here?" he asked. Luckily he was at the store at just that minute. He was sent for, greeted effusively his New York customer and admitted that the white waistcoats were identical with those that the gentleman had already for several years paid only 40 francs for. He disappeared to confer with the proprietor. When he returned it was to say with a smiling face that since the last order had been given in New York the price of those waistcoats had gone up 50 per cent.

"You can't beat the game however you try," said the Californian who had paid his bill twice, when he heard this story. "They can always do us if they want to. The only safeguard is to be careful and know just where you stand."

The Parisians have not a monopoly of this desire to get the best of the American. The recent experiences of a New Yorker who sent for his summer clothes shows how unprejudiced is the willingness to take in the Yankee. This man had also been in the habit of ordering from a representative of a firm that came here to take orders twice a year.

"This time instead of ordering anything in March," he said, "I put the man off, as I saw no way of getting them through free of duty, none of my friends at that time having given any signs of going abroad. When one went in April at short notice I told him to go to my tailor, who had my measures, and get me three suits of flannels and two tweed suits of the usual kinds. He was to pick out the goods. Nothing was said about price, as for the last ten years the suits had not varied more than a dollar or two in price. He brought back the clothes, which were all right, but when the bill came in it was nearly twice as much as I had been paying.

"Of course I put up a kick and the frank answer came back to me that the gentleman who had given the order for me had said nothing as to the price of the suits. It had apparently been only luck that during all these years I had been dealing with the firm that I had happened to ask the man they sent over what he charged for the suits. It seemed perfectly settled in the mind of the London tailor that my failure to stipulate a limit over which I wouldn't go had put it within the right of the tailor to charge whatever he wanted. I hesitated for a while and then decided to stick by that tailor. Perhaps it was a perfectly human weakness [illegible] wanted, and he was generally cheap and fitted me well. Then I was an American. That marked me out. So I paid the bill and have only to be careful in the future not to fail to ask the price in advance."

A New York woman who had a friend bring her back three white linen shirtwaists of the kind for which she had never paid more than $50 when she bought them herself found the bill was $80, although the friend had ordered an exact duplicate of the same style. The tradespeople in such a case know that they have the best of the situation. A friend who has done such a favor may be put into a very embarrassing position when the tradesman reports to the purchaser that the friend ordered goods to cost a certain figure.

"The time has passed," said a recently returned visitor to London, "when one has to be introduced to a London tailor. I know of but one establishment in which that rule prevails. In the others I suppose they look up your credit if you want to run up a big account or they go to your banker or find out through some rating agency what you're good for. But there are of course many New Yorkers who are not in any of these rating books, and of all the vast number of men from out of town who buy clothes in London during the summer I suppose that very few of them are down in the accounts of any of these agencies. This is what happened to me when I went to a tailor whom I knew as the maker of all the smart clothes that a friend of mine wore. I mentioned his name, told the salesman that took my order that I wanted to pay cash for the goods and would give him my check when they were delivered. My object in doing that was to avoid paying interest and get the cash price for the purchase.

"The clothes were cut out, I had two or three fittings, and then I got a letter from the tailor saying that he was very sorry but it would be impossible for him to proceed with making the clothes unless I sent him a check for at least two-thirds of the amount, as the garments were two-thirds finished.

"I had no idea of allowing anything of that kind to pass without protest, so jumping into a hansom I rode directly around to the shop. I asked for the proprietor, showed him the letter and asked him what in the world it meant. Rather impolitely, although with a show of immense ceremony to cover his insolence, he told me that it meant what it said. I did not intend to lose my temper with an underbred London tailor, but it was hard for me to keep it.

"'There must be some reason for any such step,' I said, 'and I insist upon knowing right now what it is. It is possible for me to throw all that order on your hands, and I shall feel rather like doing that in spite of the inconvenience it will cause me.'

"With an air of triumph he fished out of his desk a copy of a newspaper containing an account of the money troubles of a man in New York who bore a name almost identical with mine. He produced it with such pride and seemed conscious of having accomplished such a triumph of detective work that he was ludicrous. He pointed with a dirty finger ornamented with a diamond ring to a line saying that the person was thought to be in London, which I suppose accounted for the telegram being sent there.

"'You would write me this insulting letter, run the risk of losing this order and my custom merely on the strength of that telegram,' I said, 'without investigating at my bank, writing to my friend whose name I mentioned or taking any reasonable precaution to protect yourself without insulting me? Only the consideration for my own convenience prevents me from refusing to take what I have ordered.'

"He apologized humbly."

### Maine Cod Fishers.

*From the Lewiston Journal.*

Bucksport still clings to the Grand Banks fishing, and last week the first of her fleet of six big fishing schooners got away for the region of fog and cod. All are handliners; that is, they fish from dories sent out from the vessel at anchor. With fairly good luck they should fill their holds inside of three months and be back at Bucksport. If they do well some of them will be sent back for a second trip. Time was when the Bucksport fleet numbered twenty-five or thirty sail, but in those days the vessels were small and if they got a fare of 800 quintals they were considered doing well, while 1,800 quintals is a moderate fare for the present craft, all comparatively new vessels of the same model as the Gloucester and Boston fishermen. In fact several of the Bucksport fleet formerly hailed from one or the other of these ports. They carry a crew of eighteen fishermen, besides the skipper and cook. In the old times the crews were nearly all natives of the town and vicinity, but the native fishermen are now scattering and the crews are mostly Prince Edward Islanders and Cape Bretoners, with a sprinkling of Portuguese.

## HOW FLOWERS HIDE HONEY.

### Pits Where Sweets Are Stored in Lily—Concealed Nectar of Monkshood.

*From the Chicago Tribune.*

Before "the bee sucks," as Ariel put it, he must find the wonderful places where the flowers hide away their honey, to be found like the priests' hiding holes in ancient mansions, by the right sort of visitor, and to keep away all intruders.

In the recesses of the crown imperial lily at the centre can be seen six large honey pits, one on every floral leaf, and each is brimming over with a big drop of honey and glistening like a tear drop. Shake the flower and it "weeps" as the big drops fall from it, soon to be replaced by other tears in the rapidly secreting flower. The simple folk call the flower "Job's tears."

The snowdrop is literally flowing with honey, for in swollen veins traversing its fragile whiteness are rivers of nectar. The petals of the columbine are ingeniously and elaborately designed with a view to providing good places of hiding for the honey. Each is circular, hollow, shaped like a horn. In each the honey is secreted in a round knob at what would be the mouthpiece end of the horn, and the five are arranged in a ring side by side with the honey knobs aloft. Though the honey store is obvious from without, yet the insects who would sip it must creep into the flower and penetrate with a long nose up the curving horn to the knob.

Sometimes the petals are all joined together into a tube and the sweet nectar simply exudes from the inner side of the wall and collects at the bottom. This is the case in the dead nettle, the tube of which forms so toothsome a morsel that some children call it "suckies." The honeysuckle is similarly planned, and its sweetness is so striking as to have furnished its name.

The monkshood has quaint nectaries. If the hood be drawn back there suddenly spring into sight two objects on long stalks which are sometimes like a French horn, sometimes like a cowl, or, looked at sideways, not unlike a pair of doves. Their presence within the hood has provided the nicknames "Adam and Eve" and "Noah's Ark." Thus the honey bags are carefully tucked away and protected.